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Lucia A Keegan 08/08/2006 05:21:36 PM From DB/Inbox: Lucia A Keegan

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - Lebanon Cuba
PARIS - Tuesday, August 08, 2006

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Lebanon
Cuba

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

The shutting down of America's largest oil field and the new surge in the cost of oil are today's front page story in Le Figaro which also prominently features a color photograph of President Bush during his press conference, with the caption: "President Bush Against Israeli Troop Withdrawal" (from Lebanon). "Bush Rejects Immediate Israeli Pull Out" says Le Figaro: "The U.S. President wants the end of the hostilities and the UN resolution to be adopted quickly." But, says the report, "a pullout would create a vacuum propitious to a re-arming of Hezbollah" according to the U.S. position. Le Figaro announces that Secretary Rice will attend the debate this evening at the UN on Lebanon: "This would indicate that

the draft resolution is unlikely to be adopted before tomorrow." Liberation announces on its front page that the Arab League supports Lebanon's peace plan, which is "a minimum gesture of solidarity towards Beirut."

Le Figaro reports that FM Douste-Blazy has asked the U.S. to "postpone the introduction of the resolution so that 'amendments' can be added, including the withdrawal of Israeli troops." FM Douste Blazy a guest on FR3 television said that "France will not send its troops unless there is a complete cease-fire and a political agreement". He also said that France was a "mediator between Lebanon and the Arabs country, and Israel and the United States".

La Croix reports that President Bush "is said to understand the objections" to the U.S.-French plan at the UN but "repeats his willingness to reach the adoption of a text 'as soon as possible.'"

France Soir leads its reportage of the conflict with a photo of a distressed Arab Israeli woman and the title "Cries." A sidebar quotes President Bush from a press conference at Crawford, Texas: "We are going to cooperate with our partners to find a solution as soon as possible." France Soir also carries an interview with Israeli diplomat Avi Primor, who says he is "accustomed" to Israel's opponents' "exaggerations"; he claims Israel withdrew from Gaza and southern Lebanon only to be brought into war by Hamas and Hezbollah

The electronic media reports on the Arab League's support for Lebanon and Fouad Siniora's tears when he evoked the destruction of his country. For FR2, Bush, "who is an unconditional friend of Israel, will accept a quick vote for a cease fire, without Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon".

In Le Figaro researcher Fadi Assaf revisits Lebanon's various crises and comments: "The Hezbollah attack on Israel has given it a new and firmer position in Lebanon, something which other Lebanese communities did before Hezbollah... While Hezbollah's timing was Iranian, the outcome will be a Lebanese, Pan-Arabic and Islamic affair."

In Liberation a Moroccan anthropology professor is interviewed about Hezbollah's hold on the Lebanese population: "This is a movement perceived as one that could 'finally' work effectively within the Lebanese political system."

Le Figaro reports that a new party, 'the Specter' is going to 'haunt' Tony Blair: "The families of soldiers who died in Iraq are creating a new political party" hoping to present 70 candidates in the next election.

Le Figaro Economie leads with the closing of BP's oil field in Alaska and the rise in oil prices, "which is adding strain to a market already under pressure because of the new conflict in the Middle East." La Tribune lead story and editorial are devoted to "a small leak with tremendous impact" on the oil market.

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

"Siniora Gets Support of Arab League"

Georges Malbrunot in right-of-center Le Figaro (08/08): "The Arab League is sending an envoy to the UN to discuss modifications of the Franco-American draft resolution... Arab nations have quieted their differences in order to give their support to Beirut, after their initial dilly dallying, adopting the Lebanese stance and objections to the Franco-American text."

"Minimal Support From Arab League"

Christophe Boltanski in left-of-center Liberation (08/08): "After having harshly condemned Hezbollah's 'adventurism' Saudi Arabia is now faced with no other alternative but to show its solidarity with Lebanon. Solidarity for Lebanon from Gulf nations is first and foremost of a financial nature, with Kuwait and Saudi Arabia depositing two and a half billion dollars in Lebanon's central bank in order to help the Lebanese currency. This financial aid is also their way of counterbalancing the financial support coming from Islamic humanitarian associations. But on the political side, Arab nations are being much more discreet."

"A Surreal Geo-strategy in the Middle East"

Philosopher Andre Glucksman in right-of-center Le Figaro (08/08):

"The indignation of some observers elicits my own indignation. For public opinion around the world, some Muslim deaths weigh more than others: double standards are at work here. Why do the massacred civilians in Darfur fail to elicit the same reactions as those triggered by the Lebanese victims? Why are the thousands of dead civilians killed in Iraq relegated to the back pages, while the 28 civilians killed in Qana extolled as crimes against humanity? Must we consider that when Muslims kill other Muslims, it does not count for either the Muslims or the West? Must we believe that what Ahmadinejad is saying out loud is what many are thinking? Why are the West's reactions boosted when Israeli bombs are at stake? If the images of the Lebanese destruction are so shocking it is because they are implicitly captioned by a surreal geo-strategy. The leitmotif of a cataclysm or a solution on the banks of the Jordan is on everyone's mind... But those who see the Middle East as the pivot for world order are hypocritical..."

Cuba

"Behind the Scene Talks in Cuba"

Alain Ammar in left-of-center Liberation (08/08): "Behind the scenes, negotiations are on between Washington and Havana, despite President Bush's open criticism of the anti-democratic power transfer... The new players in Cuba want to establish bridges with their neighbor, as they were doing up until 2004... It is in Washington's interest to establish the bases for a post Castro era: the fear of seeing hordes of boatpeople landing on its shores remains very real." STAPLETON